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Edinburgh

HUMOURS OF THE TOWN

A DRAMATIC INTERLUDE

IN ONE ACT

Differar in otium. HORACE.

To the PUBLIC.

THE Author of the following Sketch is entirely unconnected with either party, and is very little known to any of them; neither has he any end to accompliſh. The ſtory is pretty well known, and the manœuvres of the cabinet have been divulged by the contending parties;—yet it may not be altogether unintereſting, or unentertaining, to ſet theſe perſonages in a dramatical point of view, which takes off conſiderably from the inſipidity ſo tireſome in a proſaic narrative. There has certainly been a large field for a man of genius to expatiate in; and there are ſome gentlemen of Edinburgh, if they are not in the country unbending themſelves after the toils of the Court of Seſſion, who would have amply fulfilled the expectations of the public. When the tide of party runs high, the eagerneſs with which we imbibe the torrent makes us drink deep of the contents. We ſeemed to want ſuch an inundation to give a zeſt to our fancy, which, in ſo narrow a place as Edinburgh, is ſeldom exerted upon a variety of objects or topics.

Edinburgh, Oct. 1. 1776.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A DRAMATIC INTERLUDE.

Dramatis Personae.

The INS, and OUTS.

SCENE I.

The Croſs.

L—— P——, Citizen.

L—— P——.

NOW ſlowly move towards the Capitol,
Like Brentford's ſovereigns, our marſhall'd deacons.
And ſhall Laurentius, the departments man
Of magiſtracy? ſhall his thriving legions
Election's citadel unſtorm'd poſſeſs?
Impoſſible! Laurentius ſhall miſs
The captive S——s wreſted from his fellows.
The yawning cell ſhall open, the tolbooth
Expand its iron folds; bolts, bars ſhall yield;
The ruthleſs turnkey, with his myrmidons,
To magiſterial warrant give effect.
All hell ſhall tremble, conſcious of our ſchiſm.

CITIZEN.

My Lord, your haughty words breathe rage and fury
Exceeding reaſon: the big-ſwelling accents,
Like o'ertim'd pregnancy, ſurpaſs juſt reckoning.
Duke Henry cries, to arms! blow luſtily
The trumpet of ſedition—louder ſtill;
And rend the brazen tube—another blaſt.
Or, if thou'dſt be politically wiſe,
And win the plaudits of good citizens,

Reſtrain thoſe angry harbingers of diſcord,
Which, like a breathleſs herald, may betray,
By haſty bluſt'ring, your diſſembled ſchemes.
Fly from thy new compeers, nor by advice
Put ſuch conſtruction on our promiſes
As tends to hamper and perplex the meaning.
We never told you aught, but that we held
Laurentius' foes our own.—Go tell his Grace.

L—— P——

Henry's to London gone: Another Henry
Rules in his ſtead, the noble Duke's lieutenant.

CITIZEN.

Rules there a delegate within theſe walls
With borrow'd power? or is the delegate
Himſelf a principal? let him ſtep forth
Oſtenſible, and lead the patriot van.
Ten ſquander'd thouſands from the bleating folds
Of fleecy Tweeddale ſhall our town transfer
To other Lords—then ſhall Edina mourn,
Lamenting her dim viſion; five long years
Nouriſh a factious conteſt in her vitals,
Nor ceaſe to groan.

L—— P——

Avaunt bold enemy!
Who would againſt ambition ſhut the door,
And pluck the feather from Duke Henry's creſt.

[*Exit* CITIZEN.

L—— P—— *ſolus.*

This gilded pill—this plauſible pretence
Of freedom fetter'd, ill befits our cauſe.
Th' invidious act of ſecond-handed juſtice,
Revenge abruptly us'd to ſerve a turn,

Arreſtment wrapp'd in malice, give the lie
To our aſſertions—The ingredients
O' th' flimſy compound pour'd into their ears
No more ſhall lull their ſenſes to compliance.
The hackney'd theme of liberty grows ſtale,
Unheeded, proſtituted. I remember,
Parading London, vaſt metropolis!
Diſorder'd multitudes engagement wag'd,
Huge bludgeons brandiſhing, "A Wilkes, or death!"
Each ſturdy patriot to his fellow cry'd.
Nor room was here for momentary pauſe,
Or brief expoſtulation—Wilkes for Wilkes
Alternate echos render'd—till in chaos
Th' offending outrage ſpent its energy.
Proceed we cautiouſly, nor ſtrain the pith
Of popular invention: Plots of darkneſs
Muſt in the gloom of Erebus be foſter'd.
We muſt ſecure the Weekly Magazines,
And ſtore them with ſevereſt paragraphs;
Uſe irony for lack of argument;
Beſhrew Laurentius' virtues, and his bounty
Not quite diſown, but term the guilty means
Job, rapine, plunder of the commonwealth;
So ſap the characters of our opponents. *Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Kitchen.

LICKSPIT, TURNBROCH.

LICKSPIT.

Sedition's throat is hoarſe, the din rings loud
Within our liberties. Our *collar'd* Magi,
Big with tumultuous jars, divide the Council.
They who, e'erwhile, at good Laurentius' board,

Teeming with turtle, choiceſt ſoups, and ſauces,
With fatteſt ven'ſon, ſerved hot and hot,
Feaſted to dangerous ſatiety,
All hail the dainties of Duke Henry's kitchen.

TURNBROCH.

Voracious apoſtates! ſuch greaſy rogues
Should ne'er look ſleek in ſenſual fellowſhip.
Far from the whiff of ſavour ſhall they ſtarve,
Duke Humphry's lank aſſociates; the keen knell
Of thrice-recurring dinner-bell ſhall fret
The hollow cavern of their foodleſs paunch;
Gripes for digeſtion—fitteſt ſubſtitute.

LICKSPIT.

No more ſhall callipaſh, of verdant hue,
Unſwallow'd linger; or ſhall callipee,
A kindred dainty, to the ſurfeit add.
For them no more ſhall the prolific ſwine
Bring forth her full-tim'd farrow; or ſhrewd ſkill
Impoſe upon their ſenſes with French cookery,
Mocking diſcernment—hark! the bell commands—
We muſt be gone—the gueſts are famiſhed—

Scene changes and diſcovers a Grand Entertainment; Laurentius the Elder at the head of the Table, and Young Thomaſius, his only ſon, at the foot.—Magiſtrates of different denominations.

LAURENTIUS.

Does any man ſuſpect our adverſaries
Of rankeſt ſelfiſhneſs, and envious hate,
Towards our *choſen* perſon?

GUESTS.

All ſuſpect!

THOMASIUS.

Oft has my ſire, believe me, citizens,
When agonizing torture rack'd his limbs,
While pity of his deſp'rate ſtate drew ſighs
From his afflicted moaning family,
Still mindful of your weal and intereſt,
Betaken him to the ſenate; there diſcharg'd
Thoſe duties which in weighty argument
And form inſtructive he was bound to urge.
I mark'd him zealous, the true patriot
Embolden'd his diſcourſe—but, ah, how ſoon!
Uncharitably ſoon, of former days
The paſt remembrance dwindles, and is gone!
O now ye weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity; theſe are gracious drops.
Kind ſouls! your ſympathiſing tears ſpeak warmly
The conſciouſneſs of his integrity.
What aid, what feeble helps, I, next in ſpeech,
His faithful ſtedfaſt coadjutor, lent,
Barely to mention were rank vanity.

VOLPONE.

Friends, burghers, countrymen! or, if the name
Of *faithful counſellors* delight ye more,
Be that more reverend appellation us'd.
When death had reſcu'd this devoted town
From the ſole ſway of great monopoliſts,
Who form'd ſucceſſive councils by their will,
Tutor'd by Argathelian conſequence,
Or M—t—n's ſubaltern eloquence;
Methought that if it could be ſo contriv'd,
That, watching like Grimalkin, I could mouſe,
And pack a ſet, whoſe wills would tamely bear
The muzzle of reſtraint, my ſun of glory
Would blaze in Politic's meridian.

Poſſeſs'd of ſuch, (for of ſuch eaſy ſtuff
Full many a corporation is compos'd)
I launch'd into th' abyſs, nor ſooner felt
The gentle zephyrs wanton in my ſails,
Than confidence matur'd my bold eſſay,
And made ſucceſſive members own my ſway.
Judge then, ſage counſellors, if it were beſt
Imperious nobles or their friends ſhould rule
Or our fraternity, indulgent Heaven
Has yet preſerv'd our power within its owners,
And honeſt tradeſmen cheriſh their juſt rights.

LAURENTIUS.

Gallant aſſertors of your liberties,
From the firſt moment your unbiaſs'd choice
Plac'd me upon the envied pinacle
Of your high favour, I your hated ſervant,
Poor in deſert, but not deſerving hate,
Was mark'd for future vengeance. Heaven can witneſs
(And to my fame I boaſt it), the ſucceſs
Was leſs of my own ſeeking, than your ſuccour
Was forward to my chuſing; then this S—t
Child of my courteous commendation,
Was cheriſh'd even within my inmoſt ſelf,
More than myſelf, if, ſlighting my intent,
The partial bias of my wav'ring thoughts
Gave way and lean'd to his eſpous'd advice,
Making his ſounder judgment paramount.

PLATTER.

The ſacrifices we have lately made
To quiet nice and tender conſciences
Endanger our cloſe union. One among us
Hating his brother ſcorns i' th' team to draw
Of next year's yoking, the indignant W——r,

Able defender of his challeng'd conduct,
Avows his enmity 'gainſt J—n D———.

A GUEST.

Then ſcour the muddy hue of their complexions,
Which, chafing as they meet, diſorder'd grow
And need the burniſhing of your vocation.

THOMASIUS.

It muſt be ſo—baulk'd of our favourite choice,
D——— to K——d muſt yield the palm;
We know him faithful, and of temper'd metal,
Nor leſs our friend that friendſhip is o'er-rul'd.
W—— deals honeſtly, his hard conditions
Although not ſav'ry to our wiſtful palates,
Gave warning of the price of his attachment.
Others leſs ſcrupulous forſook the poſt
Diſclaiming due allegiance, unreliev'd;
Vaunting the policy of their defection.
If then, like murder'd Strafford, to appeaſe,
And reconcile th' arrangement, J—n D———le,
Late miſbegotten dies in embryo,
All ſhall be well again—but ſtay—this junto
Him thus lopped off—politically dead,—
Will at your chief anointed aim their ſhafts,
And bring deſtruction on my father's head.
What then enſues?—uſurpers fill the council—
The conſul verſed in turning locks and bolts,
Shall like a ſecond Cromwell purge the court,
And vote your minutes uſeleſs, void and null.
You will have law enough I warrant you,
Volumes of precedents, my friends, to boot,
And your credulity will ſtamp the fiat.
I've ſeen within the hall of Windſor caſtle
A portrait drawn in kingly attitude,

The chaſte reſemblance of our ſecond Charles,
From garter'd leg up to the monarch's ſhoulders,
Immortal William, envious to degree
Of his high predeceſſor, Richard like,
Cried, Off with Stuart's head! the ax-turn'd pencil
Sever'd the original—th' unknown Apelles
With nice coincidence and cloſeſt cement,
Made William-Charles, Charles-William on't.
Blending the two-fold majeſty in one.
A kingly regicide! but he had virtues
T' obliterate th' injurious conceit.
But have they virtues which Laurentius lacks?
Or are their heads and hearts of better ſtuff?
But Brutus ſays he is ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man.

LAURENTIUS.

Ambitious?——I was ambitious!
I am ambitious ſtill, ambitious ſhall be!
Ambitious to remain your choſen ſervant,
Ambitious of your town's proſperity!
If, through the tenor of my mighty pride,
My ſwelling heart o'erleaped moderation,
If there be guilt in ſuch ambition
I am the guiltieſt member of us all.
When on this late occaſion I came here
And ſtretch'd my arms to my conſtituents,
Heaving the ſigh of long continuing love,
Some hung upon my neck, ſome turn'd their heads,
Some, Judas-like affected, bid me welcome,
Some hir'd to rob me of my conſequence,
Beſet the jewel of my reputation,
Breathing corroſive ſpite to damp its luſtre;
Was it well done?———

VOLPONE.

Fie on ſuch treacherous greeting!
Who ſhall be ſafe, who ſhun th' aſſaſſin's knife,
If faithleſs looks pourtray'd in friendly guiſe
Shall thus our unſuſpecting paths bewray
And lead us to the dangerous precipice!

LAURENTIUS.

I have been charg'd with crimes and miſdemeanours—
The bold defamers like to waſps and hornets,
Skimming the flow'ry tiſſue of my paths,
Have 'ſtead of honey ſuck'd pernicious poiſon—
Gibing with ſatire my identity:
" 'Twas but the other day this ſame Laurentius
" Vended broad raiment in the Luckenbooths;"
As if it were a crime, kind citizens,
T' have been with you a loving citizen;
As if our town had dwindled to decay,
Nor need a merchant repreſentative.
Next comes the mighty crime of opulence—
And the paſt earnings of the German war,
In queſtionable hand-bills to defame me.
Was it a ſin of mighty magnitude
(Others refuſing the advent'rous riſk)
To pledge my fortune for the army's ſervice?
Then was Laurentius, good, eaſy man,
Deem'd madman, idiot, folly's eldeſt ſon!
Now proſperous gentleman, then rich purveyor!
Conqueror of Edinburgh in Germany.

PLATTER.

I do remember the great commoner,
Warm'd or with gen'rous wine, or German meaſures
Intoxicated, challeng'd the attention
O' th' wondering ſenate!—what great Wolfe atchiev'd

Was German all!—what Monckton! German alſo—
What Amherſt, Murray, Townſhend! German ſtill—
By parity of ſuch ſound reaſoning,
Our politicians turn th' extraneous war
To our own capital; ſee guineas fly—
Guineas! (infallible artillery!)
Like cannon balls, and every ſhot takes place;
Call the charg'd purſe our enſign, neither ſcruple
To ſtamp me Captain of the RIFLEMEN.

LAURENTIUS.

Now on my fellow-citizens!—Thomaſius,
Cheriſh thoſe generous ſouls; this cap of honour
Shall to thee, child, deſcend with better quiet,
When in the dull cold marble I'm entomb'd.
Farewell, kind gentlemen; and may ye live
In health, in joy, in union, and renown.

Exeunt omnes.

FINIS.

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